

This Week in Congress

July 6, 2010

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." More than two centuries ago our founding fathers gathered on July 4, 1776 to sign the Declaration of Independence, symbolizing the birth of our nation. The first anniversary of this historic event was celebrated much as it still is today, with fireworks, parades and family gatherings. As Americans, we are fortunate to live in a free country. I hope you enjoyed celebrating that freedom this weekend with your family and friends on our nation's Independence Day.

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America's Borders Must Be Secured

President Obama gave a major speech this week in which he called on Congress to pass immigration reform legislation. The first step to fixing our broken immigration system is to secure the borders. Violence along the border with Mexico recently led the Bureau of Land Management to post signs near the border warning Americans that the area is dangerous and cautioning against travel. Yet, despite the need for stronger border security, President Obama is only sending 1,200 National Guard troops. More troops and Border Patrol agents are needed to stop violence along the borders and protect Americans. I am a sponsor of legislation that will strengthen border security by hiring additional Border Patrol agents and making use of technology to monitor and protect our national boundaries.

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Cuba Trade Legislation Approved by Agriculture Committee

On Wednesday, the House Agriculture Committee approved H.R. 4645, legislation to expand agricultural sales to Cuba. The vote was instrumental in moving H.R. 4645 one step closer to consideration by the entire U.S. House of Representatives. I introduced H.R. 4645 in February with Congressman Collin Peterson, Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture.

The Committee's action is a step in the right direction and a victory for America's farmers and ranchers. Cuba must import nearly eighty-five percent of its food and current U.S. trade policies hurt American farmers and ranchers by making it more expensive for Cuba to purchase our agriculture products. Instead of buying U.S. commodities, current policy encourages Cuba to buy its food from countries such as Vietnam and China. This legislation will standardize our trade policies, increase export sales and create thousands of American jobs without increasing the deficit.

Nearly 150 U.S. organizations voiced their strong support for H.R. 4645, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Association of Wheat Growers and the National Farmers Union. [Click here](#) to read more about the passage in committee of this legislation.

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Congressional Leaders Have Failed to Address Budget Deficits

One of the basic responsibilities of Congress is to produce an annual budget. Yet, it is now halfway through 2010 and congressional leaders have failed to bring forward a budget that addresses escalating budget deficits and controls government spending. Kansas small businesses and families must live within the confines of a budget, and so should our government.

Earlier this week, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projected the federal debt will reach 62 percent of the nation's economic output this year – the highest level since shortly after World War II. CBO Director Doug Elmendorf warned that “significant changes” will be needed to control the long-term debt and avert a crisis. This is further confirmation that the current economic policies have failed and our current path is unsustainable.

With such troubling news, I have joined my colleagues in the Republican Study Committee (RSC) to offer a balanced budget plan to address our nation's economic problems. This budget plan would achieve surpluses in 2019 and 2020 and would result in \$6.4 trillion less debt than President Obama's budget. This proposal would also provide \$1.7 trillion in tax relief over the next five years. The RSC budget offers real solutions to our nation's economic problems and will help get our economy back on track. [Click here](#) to read more about the RSC balanced budget proposal.

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House Passes Damaging Financial Reform Legislation

On Wednesday, I voiced my strong opposition in the House of Representatives to H.R. 4173, the Dodd-Frank Act of 2010. All this so called financial reform legislation accomplishes is to heap additional regulation and burdens upon community financial institutions which by and large were not the cause of the financial crisis. Even worse: this legislation doesn't adequately address the issue of the 'too big to fail' for Wall Street firms that were the root of the problem. The added regulatory costs on the community banks in this bill will further slow job growth in our economy. In Kansas, this will especially hurt small businesses and farmers and ranchers that need loans from their community banks to help make payroll and grow their crops. The added costs of the regulations and increased capital requirements on these financial institutions will lead to an even worse credit market. Unfortunately this bill passed the House by a vote of 237-192. [Click here](#) to watch my comments on this issue.

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WTO Ruling Confirms Need for Level Playing Field in the Tanker Competition

The World Trade Organization (WTO) this week issued a final ruling that found European governments guilty of providing illegal subsidies to Airbus. The WTO's decision confirms that Airbus was given billions in illegal launch aid subsidies, including money for the development of the A330, which is the airframe being competed in the U.S. Air Force's refueling tanker competition.

These illegal subsidies are harming the U.S. aerospace industry and distorting the military's tanker competition. Especially at a time when jobs are desperately needed, the Pentagon can no longer ignore this unfair advantage that hurts American workers. I joined my colleagues in again asking Defense Secretary Robert Gates to acknowledge the existence of these subsidies and take steps to nullify unfairness in the tanker competition.

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Honoring Kansas WWII Veterans

On Tuesday, I welcomed more than 30 World War II veterans to Washington, D.C. These Kansas veterans came to see the World War II Memorial created in their honor, thanks to the Honor Flight Network. Staffed by volunteers and funded by donations, the Honor Flight Network is a non-profit organization that enables American veterans to travel to our nation's capital to see the memorials built in their honor.

In the morning, I joined the veterans as they visited the Korean War Veterans Memorial and Vietnam Veterans Memorial. At sunset that evening, we returned for a Vesper Service at the World War II Memorial. During my time with the veterans, I thanked them for their commitment and loyal service to our country. May we always remember the debts we owe them for their sacrifice in protecting our country and liberating the world. Special thanks to Mike VanCampen and to all the volunteers for putting together such a special day for these veterans.

Veterans in the group included: Marlin Ames of Salina; Earl Baker and Melvern Schroeder of Wichita; Royal Barker of Council Grove; Ray Beisel of Downs; Robert Collins, Bob Severance and John Severance of Beloit; Lyle Engle of Soloman; Dick Gibbs of Vermillion; Bob Gordon of Lindsborg; Arthur Hale of Augusta; Lee Hockett of Larned; Lyman Huckstadt of Garden City; Rexford Hyde, Ray Thornburg and Everett Waugh of Osborne; Warren Inskeep of Cawker City; John Paul Keeley and Ed Kirk of Great Bend; Gerald Konen and Lawrence Reschke of Little River; James McCarty of Hutchinson; Luther Meek of Lyons; John Jr. Minor of Ashland; Peggy Phipps of Garden City; Paul Pletcher of Smith Center; Virgil Ronnebaum of Axtell; Walt Schmidt of Lindsborg; James Sharpe of Mulvane; Dale Snyder of Lyons; Bill Todd of Leavenworth; Ivan Worthen and Izzy Bombardier of Concordia.

[Click here](#) to view a photo from the visit. To learn more about the Honor Flight Network and their efforts to honor America's veterans, please visit www.honorflights.org.



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Congressional Hearing Held to Review USDA Conservation Programs

The House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research held a hearing on Thursday to review the delivery of current conservation programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Witnesses included Dave White, Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Jonathan Coppess, Administrator of the Farm Service Agency (FSA), as well as seven other groups involved in conservation activities. One of the witnesses representing the National Association of FSA County Office Employees (NASCOE) was accompanied by the NASCOE President, Myron Stroup from Fontana, Kansas.

During the hearing, I discussed with Chief White the importance of preserving the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help Kansas producers conserve land and ease the cost of complying with environmental regulations. I also asked Chief White to move forward with crafting a NRCS-approved conservation activity for the conversion of agricultural lands from irrigated farming to dryland farming. This was a requirement of the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) and developing an approved conservation activity to accomplish this water quantity conservation practice is needed to help Kansas producers better prepare an application to the AWEP program. Finally, I asked the NASCOE witness about a proposal to deliver conservation and farm programs in a way that provides better service to the producer, while saving the federal government money.

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Recognizing Kansans for Sharing Irena Sendler's Heroic Story

On Tuesday, I shared the story of an unsung hero, Irena Sendler, and the Kansas students who uncovered her courageous story. In 1999, Norm Conard, a history and social studies teacher at Uniontown High School in Uniontown, Kansas came across a short clipping from News and World Report explaining the story of Irena Sendler, a Polish social worker who helped rescue as many as 2,500 Jewish children during the Holocaust. Mr. Conard, along with ninth graders Megan Stewart, Elizabeth Cambers and Jessica Shelton and eleventh grader Sabrina Coons, thought the number of children mentioned in the article was a misprint. Mr. Conard encouraged the students to research the story further as part of a National History Day Project.

While searching for Irena's resting place, the students discovered that she was in fact alive. After many letters were exchanged, the students traveled to Poland to meet Irena in 2001, where they were able to speak with her about her heroic work during the Holocaust. The Uniontown students used Irena's story as inspiration for a play called Life in a Jar to honor her contributions and to share her story with the world. Since 1999, these students, along with others from Southeast Kansas, have presented Life in a Jar to audiences at over 270 venues around the world, including performances for Irena in Warsaw. They have also performed for Holocaust survivors, many who were saved by Irena. Since the students' discovery, Irena received international recognition for her brave work. She was awarded the 2003 Jan Karski Award for Valor and Courage and was recognized by Pope John Paul II and the President of Poland. Additionally, Irena was considered for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. In 2008, Irena passed away at the age of 98.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Irena's story in my remarks to the U.S. House of Representatives. For more information about the Lowell Milken Education Center in Fort Scott,

Kansas, please visit www.lowellmilkcenter.org . For information about the Life in a Jar Foundation, please visit www.irenasendler.org .

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Regular, Nutritious Meals Necessary for Healthy Kids

On Thursday, I participated in a conference call with members of the Kansas Child Nutrition Coalition to discuss ways to reduce child hunger and improve nutrition. Despite Kansas being a world leader in food production, our state ranks near the bottom nationally on important measures of food security. In fact, nearly one in five children in our state live at risk of hunger. As a co-chair of the House Hunger Caucus, I understand the importance of making sure no one goes hungry. Kansas children not only need to have enough food to eat, but also need access to healthy, nutritious food. Thanks to Carrie Shapton, Karen Siebert, Lisa Ousley and Sister Therese Bangert of Kansas City; Tawny Stottlemire, Barbara LaClair and Claudette Johns of Topeka; Cathy Gray, Trudy Racine and Debi Kreutzman of Wichita; and Glenda Rowland of Whitewater for taking time to discuss these important issues with me.

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Touring Cessna Plant in Wichita

On Monday, I toured a Cessna Aircraft Company plant in Wichita. Since 1927, Cessna has been an integral part of Wichita's growth, with two facilities that employ more than 8,000 Kansans. As a senior Member of the Aviation Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I have worked hard on issues that involve the general aviation industry. This includes being a lead opponent of the user fee proposal in Congress which would make the general aviation industry pay a disproportionate amount the costs associated for maintaining our nation's airways. Thanks to Jack Pelton, Doug Oliver, and Jim Franchville for their hospitality and for showing me around the facility. [Click here](#) to view a photo of my visit.

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